

THE PEDAGOGICAL PROFILE OF THE “BODY IN MOTION” IN FORMAL EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

IL PROFILO PEDAGOGICO DEL “CORPO IN MOVIMENTO” NEI CONTESTI EDUCATIVI FORMALI

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Abstract

The educational institution has the important task of shaping the citizen of the future. An important help, now increasingly recognized in the scientific field, is provided by the physical sciences, especially in the first cycle of education. This discipline can be defined as a real indicator of the pupil's performance, growth and development. It is able to influence global learning throughout the learner's developmental growth, managing to make him an active part of the entire educational process, shaping and significantly improving aspects such as identity, autonomy, emotions, socialization, basic values of the adult of tomorrow. This contribution aims to highlight the close link that exists between physical activity and education, and the ability that these have to positively affect the performance of pupils during the first cycle of school education.

L'istituzione scolastica ha il rilevante compito di plasmare il cittadino del futuro. Un importante aiuto, oramai sempre più riconosciuto in ambito scientifico, viene fornito dalle scienze motorie, in particolare nel primo ciclo d'istruzione. Questa disciplina può essere definita come un vero e proprio indicatore del rendimento, della crescita e dello sviluppo dell'alunno. Essa è in grado di influenzare l'apprendimento globale durante tutta la crescita evolutiva del discente, riuscendo a renderlo parte attiva di tutto il processo educativo, foggando e migliorando in modo significativo aspetti come l'identità, l'autonomia, le emozioni, la socializzazione, valori basilari dell'adulto del domani. Il presente contributo vuole evidenziare lo stretto legame che c'è tra l'attività motoria e l'educazione, e la capacità che questi hanno di incidere positivamente sul rendimento degli alunni durante il primo ciclo di istruzione scolastica.

Keywords

Motor Activity, Education, First Cycle of Education.

Attività Motoria, Educazione, Primo ciclo di Istruzione.

1. The Body as a Learning Tool

The body must be considered as the instrument through which knowledge is reached. It manifests what the person is, and it is for this reason that one identifies with the body that each one possesses (Federici, Valentini, Tonini, 2008).

Thanks and through the body it is possible to experience, interact with the surrounding world and learn; therefore it can, conceptually, be divided into a part connected to the brain and

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another that experiences continuous interactions with itself and with the environment that surrounds it.

From birth, the first discovery that the child makes is his own body, he begins to know it and subsequently, he begins to communicate, learn and have new experiences with others and with the outside world.

Having mastery of one's body means being able to learn new skills that allow greater safety in the motor actions that are performed, and subsequently a better interaction / relationship with the environment, as the ability to select them is increased (Lipoma, 2019) .

What allows this close relationship between the body and the outside world are the neuronal mechanisms, which, making use of the sensory-motor system, create a perception-action mechanism, thus promoting learning by exploiting the lived motor experience.

The body plays a very important role in learning processes as thanks to the motor act it is able to affect multiple components such as behavior, communication and emotion; values that go beyond the physical aspect, but which are a fundamental part of the learning process (Serio, 2012).

This close collaboration between the brain and the body generates a global perception of the latter, without which it would not be possible to have a vision of the external world, also eliminating the conditions for action and consequently for learning.

Acting and interacting both with oneself and with what surrounds us by exploiting one's body is fundamental in the learning process, as thanks to it is possible to express any form of emotion that could arise during a motor action, favoring the discovery of new motor behaviors and innovative forms of learning (Mufanò, 2017). What is mentioned above is observable above all in children, in fact when they play, they do nothing but explore, experiment new motor skills until they become their own, thus discovering new forms and ways of learning.

Knowing and being aware of one's body means being able to carry out one's motor actions in the best possible way, therefore the cognitive component is also and above all involved (Valentini, Cinti, Troiano, 2018). The mind-body relationship promotes interaction with the outside world and everything happens through neuronal action, therefore not only the motor but also the cognitive learning phase is necessarily involved. What has been mentioned is especially evident in the developmental age, as the child, even if he has a certain awareness of his body, his needs and his potential, is not always able to reach the goal he has set for himself, and it is in these moments that the possibility of being able to recruit new tools or methods of learning, offered by the motor act generated by the body, that it will be possible to achieve what is predetermined.

Therefore the body must be understood as the tool par excellence in the learning phase, and not as a mere accessory that is part of the same, especially in the developmental age, as a child compared to an adult person, communicates, moves, explores much more with one's own body (Maggi, 2020).

Affirming that the body is the tool for learning is equivalent to saying that it is a place of perception and action, that is, it is the place where cognitive activity takes place, and therefore sensory and motor stimulations which are connected to each other occur in it (Cereda, 2016).

The cognitive component and thought refer to both the perception of the outside and the inside, understood as emotions, self-perception and everything that derives from past experiences.

The role of the body in cognitive processes assumes great importance as it promotes good communication and reception of stimuli deriving from the outside and inside, therefore motor practice considerably increases the learning phase. Therefore the sensory-motor, body-linguistic and emotional-communicative axis are continuously affected by the close link between motor action, represented by the body, and that of learning, represented by cognition (Iani, 2019).

Taking advantage of one's body through motor activity means, in a construction phase such as the evolutionary one, being able to understand one's own corporeality, which entails a greater knowledge of identity, of body and of all its abilities. Furthermore, we must not forget that what is learned in this phase does not only concern this specific period of time, but the whole span of life.

It is evident the importance of being able to think of innovative educational practices that increasingly involve the body as a learning tool, capable of positively affecting aspects such as emotions, communication, motor language, thus simplifying the cognitive process by exploiting values positive motor activity (Paloma, D'Anna, Zotti, 2015). Therefore it is necessary to offer a new vision of the body and consequently of motor activity, in order to be able to enhance the role they play in the developmental age of the child. This implies being able to implement values aimed at psycho-physical well-being in the growth process, offering a new vision of the body, understood as an expression of one's personality, of the values and emotions present in it, deriving from the knowledge that one has of the external world.

It is the natural consequence of a continuous alternation between acting and feeling new emotions in both formal and informal learning environments. This incessant movement-interaction of the body with the environment does nothing but offer new construction elements necessary for the creation of new knowledge.

Therefore the body is not exclusively a biological component, but is an active, thinking part of the learning process. It represents the person himself, it is one's own experience, it is an instrument of knowledge, it is the result of an inseparable link between one's psychic, social and physical self (Benetton, 2016).

2. The educating value of Motor Activity

Today's society is disinterested to a type of training and education deriving from motor and sports practice. The body understood as an essential means of connection between oneself and the surrounding world is increasingly mistreated to the detriment of a society more oriented towards the technological axis.

Motor activity is able to propose fundamental and necessary aspects for the formation of the person thanks to its universal language that allows it to be recognized worldwide despite economic and social differences (Moia, 2018).

In childhood age, the child, interacting with the surrounding environment and through the countless motor experiences, learns both from a motor and cognitive point of view, affecting multiple aspects such as socialization, communication and the formation of one's ego.

The practice of motor activity or of a specific sport must not be an end in itself or exclusively as purpose the only in victory, but it must have the training of the person as its primary goal.

In childhood age, the playful component inherent in motor practice has the complicated task of preparing for the relationship with oneself and with others, showing and making people learn the values of life that otherwise would not be easy to achieve (Casolo, 2016). In this period of life, characterized by a delicate evolutionary moment, it is important for the educator to propose a type of motor activity that is calibrated on objectives that are achievable in the short, medium and long term, and that take into consideration not only the motor axis, but also and above all values such as communication, emotions and socialization, in order to be able to decrease the deleterious effects of contemporary society.

Minimizing motor practice almost until it is completely eliminated, does not generate the same effects in adults and children, since if in the first case the risk factors for the onset of pathologies are increased, in the second in addition to producing consequences as in the first case, an important limitation and / or closure of the child's formative-educational channel will certainly

be generated, thus compromising not only the motor aspect, but also the social, communicative and emotional one.

When it comes to motor activity, the body must not be seen exclusively as a means to carry out the same, but must be understood as a tool to be used to be able to cope with any difficulties of: nature (motor, social and emotional), interaction / communication (with oneself and others) and learning; all this must be aimed at a single final goal, that is to lead to the formation of one's own identity.

The practice of motor activity generates innumerable beneficial effects, first of all the feeling of physical well-being that movement offers, to which the spontaneous aggregation that is created to achieve the common goal is certainly added, without forgetting the playful aspect of the practice. movement that produces fun, sharing of moods, moments of difficulty and psychological growth (Lipoma, Naples, Paloma, 2008). This explains the reason why it is considered an educating and formative practice, that is able to interest many aspects that can be considered as preparatory to future social life.

Motor practice possesses skills whose formative value is undeniable, and allows us to affirm that it has an educational value that is anything but marginal, and it is for this reason that it can no longer play a secondary role in educational contexts, be they of a formal type, informal and non-formal. In each of these contexts, motor activity in childhood age aims to enhancing one's body, strong self-esteem and to the development of the child's identity (Sgambelluri, 2012). For this to happen, it is necessary to work on three levels starting from the formal axis in which the school is present. It must give greater value to the issues inherent to motor practice, but above all it must place this discipline at the center of the child's educational and training process.

Motor activity must act as training for not only cognitive but also emotional, social and relational learning (Lodi, Seghi, Barbieri, Lovecchio, 2018). Thanks to it, therefore, it is possible not only to improve the perception and mastery of one's body but to be able to exploit its innate abilities to improve the cognitive, emotional and social aspect, making use of components such as play, movement and the relationship that it is created with the environment and all the other actors who participate in this educational process.

Motor action inevitably entails the constant challenge of one's identity, which changes thanks to the countless learning experiences to which it is subjected. This involves a continuous improvement also from the point of view of independence and self-esteem, and an ever increasing cognitive maturation, inevitably generating a greater sense of self-efficacy.

Motor and body activities create an inseparable and necessary bond for the educational and training process, especially in the developmental age, as they are part of the growth and global maturation of the person and allow a greater and better knowledge of one's own body and just me, in order to favor a correct educational construction of one's personality and identity (Guicciardi, Ciairano, 2007).

3. The Educational Role of Motor Activity in the First Cycle of Education

Motor Activity must be able to obtain greater recognition especially in formal learning contests, in order to be able to show off all the educational potential that the body and movement possess. Unfortunately, the idea that still exists today and prevails in these contexts is that the motor-body axis does not have an educational value like the other disciplines, and for this reason it is little considered if not mortified. The educational institution should represent the educational and training place par excellence, and as such have and give equal consideration and dignity to all the disciplines that are part of it (Casolo, 2019). Specifically, the practice of physical activity in the first cycle of education, in the Italian school system, is not yet recognized for what it

deserves, in fact the subject of motor science is not present among the other disciplines and any hours of physical activity are proposed by unskilled teachers.

During delicate age such as the first cycle of school education, the lack of physical activity certainly represents a deficiency in the educational and training environment. This highlights that, even if the Italian school system is able to transmit numerous knowledge and skills, it is still lacking in terms of the importance of motor activity understood as not only a motor proposal but also and above all as an educational capacity from a social point of view, communicative, emotional and psychic.

The educational objective that motor activity has, especially in the first cycle of education, is to demonstrate that there is no separation between the physical and psychic component, but on the contrary these two aspects go hand in hand and allow the person to feel one with one's body and one's way of being in the world (Ceciliani, 2018).

Feeling and being your body means acting and thinking, which implies interacting with what surrounds us, changing your way of doing things, and this is the role that motor activity must have in kindergarten and primary school; it must foster knowledge of one's own body and allow the latter to interact with the environment in order to begin to structure their own identity, to build their own knowledge (Federici, Toscani, 2018). The school, in this phase, should plan the activities that must be carried out, avoiding to lean towards educational forms with a strong theoretical imprint that mainly aim at knowledge and aim above all at knowing how to do and know how to be. It is in this sense that greater importance must be given to the educational value of motor activity, seen again, within the school system, as a mere practice of body training. This vision of mind disconnected from the body is still present in the school environment, and this is evident already in the first school years of the first cycle of education, in which one still works with finished tasks completely excluding processes, and motor activity takes place, with simple motor offers aimed at thinking about bodies in motion and completely separate from other disciplines. Conversely, it should aim to increase and enhance the opportunities for doing, communicating, socializing and relating with others in order to simplify the possibility of being able to express what each child is (Tortella, Generosa, Fumagalli, 2020).

A lot of scientific researches have demonstrated the educational value that motor activity possesses especially in the first cycle of education, revealing a real alternation between the predominantly practical concept and a dimension that connects the body and movement in its complexity to education. This new training course has the task of leading motor activity towards new educational values, therefore it must take into consideration the fundamental parameters of the school institution such as the psycho-physical, emotional-affective, communicative-expressive, socio-relational axis, cognitive and motivational, so as to be able to pursue both intrinsic and transversal objectives of motor development but still interconnected with corporeality and movement. From this point of view, motor activity in the first cycle of education takes on great importance from the point of view of body and movement education, as it is capable of offering and encouraging healthy lifestyles and taking care of fundamental values for the future of society civil.

The educational institution must be increasingly oriented towards the idea of the person as a whole, in order to lead towards an educational pedagogical orientation that leads to a learning process in which motor activity is the starting point for proposing new experiences, discoveries and ensure that the pupil reaches new forms of awareness and acquires new knowledge and skills. Therefore it is necessary that there is a real transition that leads from making movement, which is purely based on an operational dimension, to thinking about movement, which focuses on the conception of interpretation and implementation of actions inherent to the body dimension and expression of the identity of each.

In the first cycle of education it is important that the mode of transmission of knowledge makes use of the educational potential of motor activity, and for this to happen it is necessary that the learning phase is strongly connected to the emotional axis, which implies the pleasure of acquiring new knowledge deriving from motor practice and from the body as a mediator of learning (Tortella, Tessaro, Fumagalli, 2014).

A child who practices any form of motor activity benefits from not only motor but also emotional, social and cognitive advantages; this highlights the educational sense of motor practice, capable of enhancing the abilities and specificities of each one. What has been stated demonstrates that every difference is conceived as richness and every single motor contribution can be interpreted and amplified by each participant in the educational process.

Motor practice must therefore aim at a global educational concept that points to the formation of an autonomous thought and action (Bortolotti, 2017). In kindergarten and primary school, the body and the movement it is able to producing must be considered as the ability to express all one's emotions and therefore oneself. Therefore, motor activity can be considered formative and educating, both for the ability to offer greater self-awareness, and because, thanks to the many playful-motor experiences, responsibility and personal autonomy are urged.

In the developmental age, which affects the first cycle of education, the pupil must improve in particular the motor, cognitive and emotional axis, all by exploiting the continuous comparison with others and with the surrounding environment (D'Anna, 2018). Therefore the teacher's task is to lead the child in this educational process of exploration, allowing him to know and assimilate the first rules of the social group (Altavilla, 2021). In this phase, the task of motor activity is to offer motor proposals that have a predominantly playful component so that ample space is given to the intrinsic potential of the child. Therefore, thanks to play and motor education, the learner explores the world around him and learns through the rules to share social spaces, furthermore the playful component and group motor activities favor the possibility of experimenting with fundamental values for personal growth. and social (self-esteem, respect for others and responsibility, recognition and appreciation of diversity, solidarity in the group, altruism and cooperation).

In the first cycle of education, motor activity is able to promote knowledge of the self, of one's potential, contributing to the formation of one's personality and identity, for which it is called educating because the body becomes an active part of learning, the true protagonist of the didactic educational relationship.

4. Survey on Motor Activity in the First Cycle of Education

This research work aims to highlight the positive influence that motor activity generates on the learning of pupils in the first cycle of education. To meet this purpose, a group of teachers from Comprehensive Institutes was taken into consideration, who were subjected to an ad hoc questionnaire and the resulting data showed that there is a high consideration of Motor Activity throughout the first cycle of education, for which kindergarten, primary and lower secondary school is considered.

Questions were asked to the teachers regarding the role of the body and the importance of physical exercise throughout the first cycle of education, specifically:

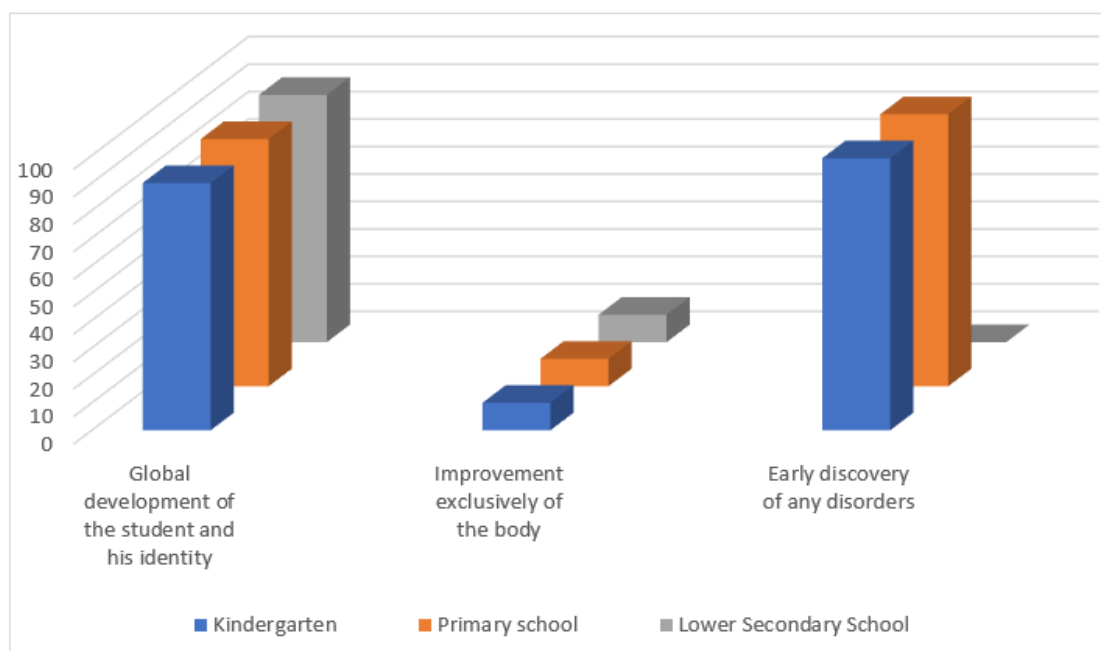
- Purpose of physical education in kindergarten, primary and lower secondary school;
- The didactic and methodological contents to be used in the different grades;
- The importance of physical education covers the knowledge of one's body and consequently in the construction of one's identity;
- The contribution that motor science can offer to other disciplines;
- The assessment of learning;

- The Resources that the M.I.U.R. offers necessary for motor practice.

Motor activity is considered an indispensable tool for the overall development of the person, therefore we do not think exclusively of the motor axis but also and above all of the emotional and socio-relational one.

The results deriving from this survey showed that with regard to the purposes of motor science, 90% of teachers recognized the importance of this subject not only from the point of view of the body but also and above all of the mind, capable of promoting a overall development of the pupil and his / her identity. It was also highlighted how motor practice leads to an improvement both from the point of view of communication, socialization and the ability to recognize and control one's emotions. Only 10% of teachers say that, in addition to body improvements, motor education is only useful for improving behavior and compliance with the rules.

An aspect that was recognized by almost all the participants of the research, particularly with regard to kindergarten and primary school, is the possibility of being able to make an initial analysis of any Special Educational Needs by the pupils by observing them during motor practice. In fact, 99% of teachers say that in children who show significant motor deficiencies very often they are associated with Specific Learning Disorders, therefore the motor observation phase could act as an alarm bell and then carry out further investigations.

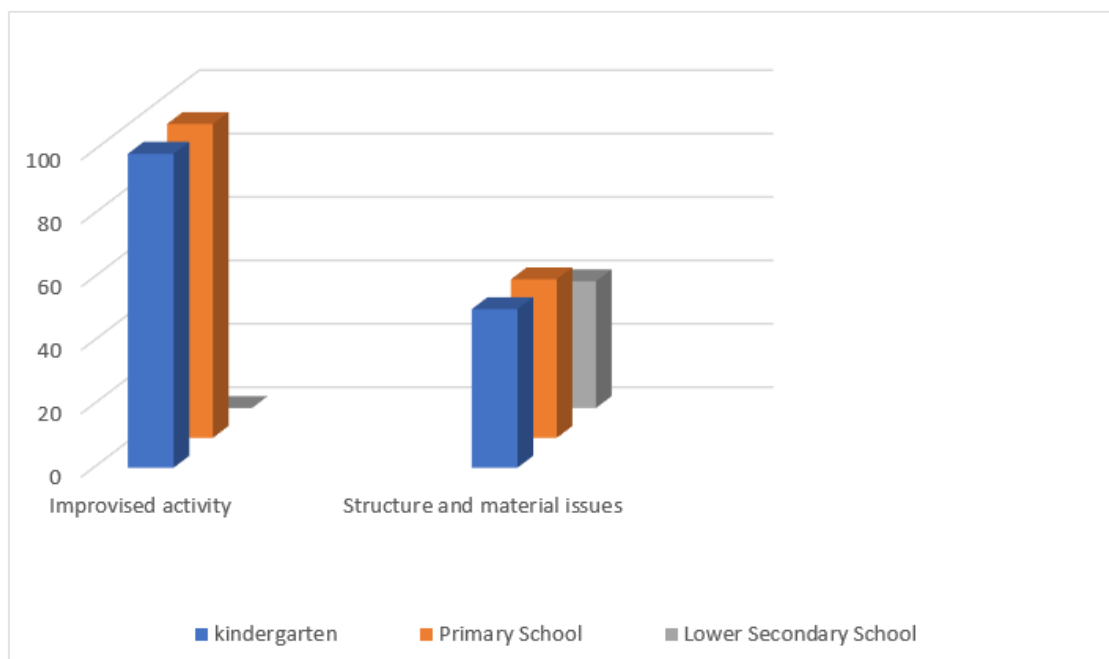


As regards the didactic contents and the motor proposals that are implemented, it was observed that in kindergarten and primary school about 80% of teachers who carry out hours of physical education or refer to their knowledge deriving from their motor experience , or in 99% they repropose games or exercises that they have seen in the many motor projects presented by external associations or by the projects offered by CONI in collaboration with the M.I.U.R.. Therefore there is no planning and structuring of the proposed activity. On the other hand, in lower secondary school the teachers follow the guidelines deriving from the National Indications, so all the motor activity proposed is well structured, follows a linearity in the proposals and there is an interdisciplinary nature between the subjects.

As regards the evaluation, all teachers agree in asserting that it must take place initially, in progress and at the end of the Didactic Learning Unit that is proposed. Furthermore, as regards kindergarten and primary school, about 75% say that they do not only evaluate the objectives

of the subject, but also focus on other components such as the degree of interest, motivation, appearance social and emotional.

Finally, it was highlighted by about 50% of the teachers interviewed that there is a strong lack of infrastructures and materials to be able to propose correct motor exercises and in the case of kindergarten and primary school the number of hours is reduced so much that it is necessary to force to resort to the annual projects proposed by the M.I.U.R..



What has been highlighted in the graphs shows that motor activity in the first cycle of education is considered a real school discipline necessary for the correct construction of a child's identity. Through the playful component, it allows learning not only from a cognitive point of view, but of values that are considered fundamental for the increase of life skills. Nevertheless, from this research activity, it emerged that especially in kindergarten and primary school, the motor activity that is proposed many times is improvised or poorly structured, therefore its social, cognitive, educational function is significantly reduced or is lacking; an aspect that is not present in lower secondary school thanks to the figure of a teacher specialized in motor science. Finally, a final aspect that has been investigated is that despite the recognition of the undisputed socio-educational value of motor activity, unfortunately there is still a rather marked deficiency in schools from the point of view of structure and motor material.

Conclusions

This work showed the importance of motor activity in the first cycle of education, understood as a necessary means to facilitate the initiation and increase of a general, global and identity development of the child / adolescent. Motor activity is recognized as a discipline of primary importance, and is supported by what has also been said by its introduction in primary school, but some shortcomings are highlighted. Even if the universal educational value of physical education is recognized, understood as a right for all pupils, there is a clear lack, especially in kindergarten and primary school, of specialized teachers, adequate structures and specific material. Therefore it is necessary to intervene suddenly, as is partly being done, providing for

the introduction of the teacher specialized in physical activity both in kindergarten and primary school (first, second and third classes), avoiding the use of qualified people, very often **non-**graduates, from associations outside the school.

Thanks to this work, a profound knowledge of the school reality has been achieved with regard to motor education in the first cycle of education, allowing us to reflect on its importance, in order to be able to definitively affirm that it must become the true one protagonist of the entire training-educational path of the pupil, as it is able to create synergies between the multiple disciplines, the school institution and all the other educational agencies present in the area. The results of this research want to make a contribution that reinforces the provisions of article 109 of the 2021 Budget Law with the introduction of the physical education teacher for the fifth class starting from the 2022/2023 school year and for the classroom fourth starting from the 2023/2024 school year.

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